

## Why Is Bicycle Safety So Important?

Just about everyone who has ever ridden a bicycle has gotten a scraped knee or elbow at some point, and even the most careful rider can take an occasional tumble. Still, knowing the rules of the road and other issues of bicycle safety can keep you from getting hurt.

About 800 people in the United States are killed in bicycle accidents each year, most of them from head injuries. And many more get injuries, such as broken bone or deep cuts that require emergency medical treatment. That's why it's so important to use the correct protective equipment when bike riding.

## Bicycle Safety Checklist

There are many things that can be done to make sure your bicycle is safe to ride. The owner's manual has a lot of information about the bicycle. Check for the following:

- Make sure the bicycle is the right size for you. Stand straddling the top bar of the bike so that both feet are flat on the ground. There should be 1 to 3 inches (2.5 to 7.6 centimeters) of space between you and the top bar. The bike seat should be adjusted so that after sitting on the seat with your foot on the bike pedal, your knee is slightly bent.
- Tighten the seat, handlebars, and wheels. Make sure the wheels are straight.
- Check and oil the chain regularly.
- Always check the brakes before riding to make sure they are working properly and do not stick.
- Check the tires to make sure they have enough air and the correct tire pressure.
- For the convenience of carrying something while riding, attach a basket to the handlebars, or a rack over the rear tire.
- Put reflectors on the bike to help people see you. Put a red reflector, 3 inches across, behind the front seat. There should also be a white reflector in front of the handlebars, and other reflectors in the spokes of both wheels.

## What to Wear While Riding Your Bike

The most important piece of protective gear is an approved **helmet**. A helmet will protect the head, and most importantly the brain. Look on the helmet for a sticker that says it meets the safety standards set by the Consumer Product Safety Commission (**CPSC**), an ANSI sticker or an approved Snell sticker. Be sure the helmet was made 1999. A helmet comes with a set of foam pads that can stick on the inside to adapt to the necessary shape of a person's head and fit snugly. **Never** ride without a helmet. Three out of four bike accidents involve an injury to the head. Today's helmets are lightweight and comfortable, and can be decorated with fluorescent, reflective stickers or a really bright color that can be easily seen.

A helmet should:

- Sit level on the head; not tilted forwards or backwards. Do not wear a hat under the helmet.
- Have strong, wide straps that fasten snugly under the chin.

- Be tight enough with straps fastened, so that no sudden pulling or twisting can move the helmet around.
- Always be fastened while riding.
- Be replaced every 5 years and immediately if you have a hard fall and hit your head while wearing the helmet.
- Never be worn on a playground. It should only be worn during biking, in-line skating, or while using your scooter.

Clothing worn while biking should be easily seen. Here are some tips to follow:

- Fluorescent-colored clothes help people see a biker better. Stay away from dark clothes like black, brown, or navy, especially when it's getting dark outside, and wear a reflective vest.
- Wear lightweight clothes to avoid becoming overheated, especially in the summer months. Be sure to pack plenty of water to drink.
- Make sure pant legs aren't loose so they don't get caught in the chain.
- Riding gloves can protect the hands, especially if off-road biking.
- If carrying a backpack make sure the straps are tied so they do not become tangled up in the wheel spokes.
- Wear shoes that grip the pedals. Never wear cleats, shoes with heels, or shoes that can easily slip off the pedals. Never ride barefoot.

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### **Riding Safely: The Rules of the Road**

Here are some important things to know about keeping safe on the road, especially, when there's traffic on the busiest streets:

- Always ride on the **RIGHT-HAND** side of the street in the same direction as cars do. **Never** ride against traffic.
- Use bike lanes or designated bike routes wherever you can - never ride on the sidewalk!
- Always stop and check for traffic in both directions when leaving your driveway, an alley, or a curb.
- Watch traffic closely for turning cars, or cars leaving driveways.
- Don't ride too close to parked cars. Doors can open suddenly.
- Stop at all stop signs and obey street (red) lights just as cars do. Be careful at intersections.
- Always walk a bike across busy intersections using the crosswalk and following traffic signals.
- It's fun to bike with friends, but always ride single file on the street. Bike riding side by side in traffic or on the street is dangerous for both bikers and motorists.
- When passing other bikers, or people on the street, always pass to their left side, and call out "*On your left.*" so they know that you are approaching.
- Never change directions, or changes lanes, without first looking behind you, and using correct hand signals.
- Know your hand signals.

- If bike riding in the evening, or when it's getting dark, be sure to have reflectors and a battery-operated headlight.
- Only one person should be on your bike at a time. The bike can become unbalanced and fall over, or suddenly swerve into the path of moving cars.
- It is **against the law** to wear headphones while biking.

### Bumps in the Road

It's a good idea to watch out for certain things in the road that could cause loss of control of your bicycle. These things to look for include:

- wet leaves
- large puddles
- changes in the road surface
- storm grates
- rocks
- any other stuff that might be on the sidewalk or road.

Pay attention to people walking and younger kids playing. Just as a car can unexpectedly pull out of a driveway, a child might chase after a ball that goes into the street.

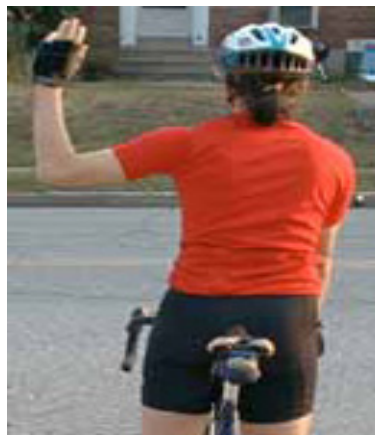
When these guidelines are followed you help to make the sidewalks, park trails, and neighborhood streets safe for everyone. So strap on that cool helmet and enjoy the ride!

### Hand Signals

Left turn



Right Turn



Stop

